

Improvement and Innovation Board – Report from Cllr Abi Brown (Chairman)

Office for Local Government (Oflog)

1. We have continued to work with DLUHC officials to ensure that the local government perspective informs the new Office for Local Government (Oflog). LGA officers and I have met regularly with DLUHC officials and I have provided further feedback as a member of the Oflog political leaders group meeting, regularly with the Minister. Alongside LGA Director of Improvement, Dennis Skinner, I frequently meet with the Interim Chair of Oflog, Lord Amyas Morse and Interim Chief Executive, Josh Goodman.
2. Oflog was formally launched in July by Rt Hon Michael Gove at the LGA Annual Conference. It will remain an ongoing project and so we will continue to work with Government to ensure the sector voice informs the next stages of development and future iterations of the tool.
3. Some commentators have suggested that the Oflog dashboard is uninviting, and therefore we have created a [version of all the metrics on LG Inform](#) which I hope you find more visually appealing. We do have concerns about some of the metrics and so on 4 August I wrote to Lord Morse raising this alongside several sector concerns. I received a response in late September and Lord Morse has agreed to meet with me in-person on 18 October.
4. In meetings with officials, I have discussed introducing a regular meeting for political group leaders on Oflog and, as a result, a political leaders group was established meeting on a fortnightly basis. On 16 October, the Minister will be meeting a group of politicians including myself, LGA Chair Cllr Davies and the LGA political group chairs.

Improvement and Assurance Framework for Local Government

5. As part of the new sector support programme, the LGA convened discussions with the sector, professional associations and others to map the different elements which provide assurance of council performance and are used to hold the sector to account, in the interests of clarity and transparency.
6. An extensive programme of engagement with the sector and professional bodies was undertaken between May and August 2023, considering a draft framework for improvement and assurance for local government. The aim was to describe the framework which exists- but is not written down – in the interests of clarity and transparency and to aid understanding of how all the elements fit together.
7. A programme of engagement with the sector on a draft framework for local government assurance has now been completed: almost 200 responses were received, largely from chief executives and elected members, but also from professional bodies, regional networks and other stakeholders including the trade press.

8. At its meeting on 13 October, the Improvement and Innovation Board will consider/considered the engagement exercise and proposals to conduct a further round of engagement, to consider how the many checks and balances in the current framework could be improved and simplified or enhanced to provide greater assurance to the sector.

Peer Support Review and Annual Member Peer Conference

9. Work to implement the recommendations following last year's peer support review is continuing with notable progress continuing to be made.
10. One instance of notable progress was through training offered to our peers. A core element of the CPC is the Peer Team, and we continue to support the development of officer and member peers. We have delivered 12 online peer training sessions with 120 delegates (both officers and members). We have also commenced a programme of in-person training for member peers. The first of these sessions was delivered in September and a further three in person sessions are scheduled before the end of the financial year. Feedback from all these sessions has been overwhelmingly positive. If you are Member Peer and are interested in joining one of the forthcoming training sessions please contact your [Political Group Office](#).
11. As part of the peer support review the LGA has also refreshed its councillor peer mentoring programme. The first of four training sessions for 2023/24 was held on 14 September. The training was supported by Cllr Sam Chapman-Allen as lead peer on the day. The councillor mentoring handbook is also in the process of being revised. A small group of councillors were asked to help with the review process. This included myself in my role as Chair of the IIB.
12. As we move into the Autumn, we are preparing for this year Annual Member Peer Conference, offering even more training and development to member peers. This year it will be held over two days from the 8-9 November in Bristol. All Member Peers should have received their invitation but if not please contact your [Political Group Office](#).
13. We continue to deliver wider work on the peer support review, working closely with the Improvement and Innovation Board, Improvement Directorate, Political Group Offices and peers.

Sustainability Support Programme

14. We are very pleased to have secured funding to deliver a Sustainability Support Programme for councils. I provided comment for our [press release](#), about the launch of the programme which was published on 2 October 2023.
15. The programme will help councils through 3 key pillars:
 - 15.1 **Building capability** – learning, skills, and guidance to help councils deliver on their climate and adaptation targets, through masterclasses and workshops that

- will highlight key sustainability themes and upskill participants. There will be specific masterclasses designed for Councillors.
- 15.2 **Tools** - such as the greenhouse gas accounting tool and waste emissions calculator which will help councils baseline their data and assist with internal emissions reporting. The programme will be funding the maintenance of these tools with the hope of developing updates as well.
- 15.3 **Networks** – an online sustainability hub, a monthly sustainability bulletin and an officer communities of practice network.

Councils will be able to access the programme by signing up to the relevant offers through the web hub and new Sustainability bulletin, both to be launched in the coming month. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in contact via sustainability@local.gov.uk

Sector support programme 2023/24

16. Our [sector support programme for 2023/24](#) continues to provide critical support and drive improvement across local government. Across the 5 themes of Governance, Leadership, Finance, Workforce and Transformation, all councils have been able to access a comprehensive support offer, shaped directly through engagement with councils, to meet their needs.

Transformation support programme

17. New to the offer this year was [Transformation](#), a programme which has been designed to provide support and advice, as well as varied learning and development opportunities. This programme aims to help councils deliver on their transformation priorities, including delivering efficiencies and improvements within service delivery.
18. Support for Councillors includes...
- 18.1 A [new matching service](#) which looks to match Councillors and officers that have identified their transformation challenges with councils that are facing similar challenges as well as those who may be further along in their transformation journey.
- 18.2 [Transformation Workshops](#) which will bring together councillors and officers to learn from successful evidence-led transformation projects so that they can develop solutions and overcome barriers to implementing transformation.
- 18.3 The opportunity for Councillors and officers to bring their formative transformation plans to a [Transformation panel](#) of experts currently working within local government to gain constructive challenge and insights.
- 18.4 Cllrs also are invited to the following [Transformation masterclass](#) where Cllr Prior will be speaking: [Community focused transformation](#), 12.00pm – 1.45pm Wednesday 25 October 2023.
19. The programme has enjoyed incredibly strong momentum from the outset, already signing up over 100 transformation experts to its network to inform and deliver specialist

support and guidance. Further support opportunities will continue to be shared through bulletins and other communications channels, as these become available.

20. Please note that the LGA's Sector Support Programme features as part of the [LGA's wider sector support offer](#), including Children's Services, Partners in Care and Health, One Public Estate, Planning Advisory Service, Cyber, Digital and Technology and Culture and Sport.

Sector support survey 2023

21. As we look towards 2024, we are beginning discussions with Government departments regarding future sector support programmes. Our wide-ranging [sector support offer](#) can be accessed on our website, which sets out all aspects of the support we provide.
22. We want to hear directly from councils to help ensure the support continues to meet the sector's needs. [Please let us know](#) what aspects of support are of most value to your councils or let us know if there are wider types of support that your council could benefit from.

Sector support offer – 2022/23 highlights

23. I'm happy to share that our [year in review for the sector support programme in 2022/23](#) has now been published. Each programme has its own page showcasing the huge array of effective support we delivered last year and promoting the unique opportunities within the sector support offer. It provides a snapshot of the ways we supported councils to improve, develop leadership, make data-informed decisions, share notable practice, and – in so doing – build capacity and capability in local government.

Improvement Activity

Peer Challenge

24. The Chair of the LGA has written to Leaders of those councils that have not had a Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) for over 5 years. The letters received a very positive response with 17 Councils responding and booking to have a CPC so far.
25. Places for 2023/24 are filling up very fast with the LGA currently on track to achieve its target of delivering 70 Corporate, Finance and Governance Peer Challenges in 2023/24. We are also on track to deliver our target of 45 Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Reviews.
26. If you would like to discuss your council having a CPC please contact your [Principal Adviser](#).

Leadership

27. [A number of resources](#) are now available to accompany the [Local Leadership Framework for Councillors](#). These include a downloadable workbook, a template slide pack to enable councils to run workshops, and guidance and examples for councillors to write their own councillor profile.

28. As part of the sector support offer, we are offering one-to-one coaching for disabled councillors. Coaching provides a powerful reflective space for councillors to grow and develop as leaders. Our highly effective coaching programme offers disabled councillors free one-to-one coaching sessions focused on personal leadership development. To find out more, or to book your place, please email leadership@local.gov.uk

Publications and engagements

This section outlines the publications that have occurred since the previous Councillors' Forum including public affairs, media releases, articles in First magazine and publications on our website.

Media Releases

29. [Launch of Office for Local Government – LGA response](#), 4 July 2023
Our response to the launch of Office for Local Government (Oflog), from Cllr Shaun Davies, Chair of the LGA.
30. [Minister for Local Government: Oflog won't spot every council failure](#), 4 July 2023
An MJ article on the launch of Oflog, including comments from Cllr Shaun Davies, Chair of the LGA.
31. [Whitehall should 'reciprocate' Oflog scrutiny](#), 4 July 2023
LGC article featuring comments from Cllr Shaun Davies, Chair of the LGA, on the accountability of Whitehall, our sector-led improvement offer, and the launch of Oflog.
32. [Office for Local Government to monitor waste services](#), 5 July 2023
Materials Recycling World article highlighting the role of targeted data and analysis from Oflog to monitor and improve waste services, featuring comments from Cllr Shaun Davies, Chair of the LGA.
33. ['Office for Local Government' to oversee council waste services](#), 6 July 2023
LetsRecycle article on the role of Oflog metrics to assess council services, including waste collection, featuring comments from Cllr Shaun Davies, Chair of the LGA.
34. [LGA launches Transformation programme](#), 18 July 2023
Our press release announcing the launch of the new Transformation programme, for which I provided comment.
35. [LGA launches programme to support council transformation](#), 20 July 2023
UKAuthority article on the new transformation programme, for which I provided comment.
36. [Be bold and better](#), 4 September 2023

I wrote an article for The MJ highlighting the need for Local Government to be bolder about the role we play as a sector, with a stronger narrative on how we review our support for each other and how we respond to Oflog and the Best Value framework.

Local Government First Magazine

37. [Inspiring and informing](#), Dated August 2023

I co-authored an article for First magazine with Peter Fleming, Chair of the Innovation Zone Working Group, highlighting the wide range of inspiring ideas to drive sector improvement covered at the Innovation Zone programme at this year's LGA Annual Conference. Including a piece on the climate tools of the future.

38. [Data transparency](#), Dated August 2023

I wrote an article for First magazine on the recent launch of Oflog and the creation of its Local Authority Data Explorer tool, in relation to metrics and data transparency.

39. [Sector support](#), Dated August 2023

I wrote an article for First magazine on the work of the LGA to establish an Improvement and Assurance Framework that provides clarity, transparency and accountability in assurance of council performance.

40. [Transforming Services](#), Dated September 2023

I authored an article for First magazine on the launch of the new LGA Transformation programme, which will support councils at every stage in their transformation process.

41. [Peer support: investing in our own improvement](#), Dated September 2023

I wrote an article for First magazine on the significance of peer support in helping councils improve, including the role played in the Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC), with a discussion of the LGA Corporate and Finance Peer Challenge annual report highlights.

Publications

42. [Adult social care assurance: A guide to support the development of your adult social care self-assessment](#), 24 July 2023

This publication was created by Partners in Care and Health (PCH) to support councils as they prepare for assurance of adult social care through assessment by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), with tools and templates to support the self-assessment process.

43. [Model Councillor Code of Conduct Survey 2023](#), 1 August 2023

This publication reports the key findings of the LGA survey to gauge the impact of the Model Councillor Code of Conduct, measuring its use in councils and the effects.

44. [Local Government Data Maturity Model](#), 1 August 2023

The updated and improved Local Government Data Maturity Model, which underpins our Local Government Data Maturity Tool found on LG Inform Plus. The model sets out a description of the behaviours and practices in relation to data that we would expect to see in local authorities at each level of data maturity.

45. [The 12 components of effective coalitions](#), 5 September 2023

Guidance framework for councils that have transitioned to 'No Overall Control' (NOC), with an outline of the 12 key components of effective coalitions, including a development exercise for councillors, officers and regional teams.

46. [Councillor workbook – Scrutiny](#), 26 September 2023

An insightful workbook to provide councillors with an understanding of the overview and scrutiny role of councils to assist in their role as a councillor.

Conservative Party Conference 2023

47. I was pleased to open the LGA local government welcome reception, introducing Ministers Michael Gove MP and Lee Rowley MP as well as Cllr Colin Noble at the Conservative Party Conference earlier this month.

48. At the conference, I also chaired the LGA's panel debate titled 'Make it Local: empowering local government with added freedoms and flexibility from Government to deliver efficient public services'. Other panellists included Minister Lee Rowley, LGA Vice President David Simmonds MP, Cllr Colin Noble and Deputy Chief Economists for the Institute for Government Thomas Pope. The debate explored the importance of local leadership in tackling the public's priorities, from building more social homes, boosting local skills programmes and empowering local public health teams to improve the nation's health.

49. At Shelter's reception titled 'A manifesto to fix the housing emergency', I spoke to give a local perspective on housing policy.

50. I was a panellist for Localis' debate on local public finances, the theme of which was what the prospects are for fiscal reform at a local level – enabling and empowering English councils to place renewed emphasis on innovation in delivering and financing high-quality and responsive public services.

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